

A blue-tinted image featuring a silhouette of a person walking away from the viewer. The background is a complex, layered pattern of overlapping, torn, and crumpled paper or glass, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and abstract.

*Moving Californians
into the Future*

www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov

7.1 Reaching Out to Californians

The Authority has sought to communicate with as many Californians as possible about what the system will be, what the process for developing it is, and what role the public has in implementing a high-speed train system for the state.

The Authority is encouraged by public awareness and support for a high-speed train system. Newspaper and television and radio news coverage of the Authority's work has led to nearly half of all Californians becoming aware of the project. In over 300 presentations, workshops and events, thousands of Californians have shared their interest, concerns and hopes for a high-speed train system. Nearly two-thirds of all Californians support building the network with a quarter-cent sales tax increase once they learn what the high-speed train system is.

The communications effort included:

Materials and Web Site

The "Imagine" brochure explains the essential elements of the project. The companion "Imagine" video captures the look and feel of the future network and presents a fast-paced depiction of high-speed trains in California. The quarterly newsletters have served to provide updates of the Authority's actions.

The prime communications tool is the Web site, www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov. The site contains detailed information on not only the Authority's work, but the previous Commission's work as well. In addition, the Web site contains a questionnaire, which has proved extremely useful in generating public feedback, and links to other high-speed train Internet sites around the world. Also, the site enables visitors to view and download consultant work, the quarterly newsletters, and the video. More than 76,500 people visit the Web site monthly.

Presentations and Workshops

The second element of the outreach effort has been presentations and workshops throughout the state to inform Californians about the Authority's efforts and listen to what people have to say about the project. In 1999, the Authority conducted over 200 presentations and workshops attended by more than

15,000 elected officials, regional and state stakeholders, and members of the public. These meetings proved to be a valuable activity to focus on regional issues and concerns associated with developing, constructing and funding the system.

Among the issues discussed in the presentations and workshops were: routes, transportation technology, costs, project financing and alternative transportation systems (air, conventional rail, light-rail, and bus). Business leaders were most interested in the effects on business travel, commerce, jobs, tourism, financing options, and route specifications. Environmental activists were excited about the potential to reduce pollution, but were concerned with construction impacts and urban sprawl. Local and regional government leaders shared their opinions on potential impacts to cities and county governments, integration with existing transportation systems and major airports, competition among local entities over routing, project phasing, and private sector participation. Leaders of ethnic groups were interested in contracting opportunities and integration with existing transportation systems.

In addition, through these meetings the Authority was able to modify and enhance the technical work to ensure that it reflected those issues and concerns. For example, concerns about preserving prime agricultural land and serving the downtowns of major Central Valley cities is reflected in not only the engineering analyses developed but in the Authority's corridor adoption resolutions and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. In addition, issues related to how to traverse the Tehachapi Mountains led to ensuring that both the I-5 Grapevine and Palmdale-Mojave alignments will be studied during the environmental phase.

Event Forums

The third element of the outreach effort entailed participation in over 100 community and cultural events throughout the state. The Authority's presence included a display, video, and brochures — all designed to encourage the public to learn more about the proposed network.

In every region, the public appeared interested and enthusiastic about the idea of high-speed trains. Most comments and questions were consistent from one region to the next:

“Is this really going to happen?”

“How much is high-speed rail going to cost the taxpayer?”

“When will it be completed?”

“Where will the route go?”

“How much will it cost to ride?”

However, each region also had concerns that were specific to that area of the state. In the Bay Area, for example, people were more interested in how the system would affect the environment and how it would tie into the regional public transportation system. Northern Californians also saw high-speed trains as an alternative to air travel to Southern California and auto travel to the Bay Area. Southern Californians, on the other hand, were enthusiastic about alleviating current transportation problems, but were less optimistic on the completion of such a complicated project.

Central Valley residents were more concerned about the impact high-speed trains would have on agriculture, the potential of such a service to bring higher-paying jobs to smaller farming communities, and the opportunity for reliable high-speed travel service to the Bay Area and Southern California.

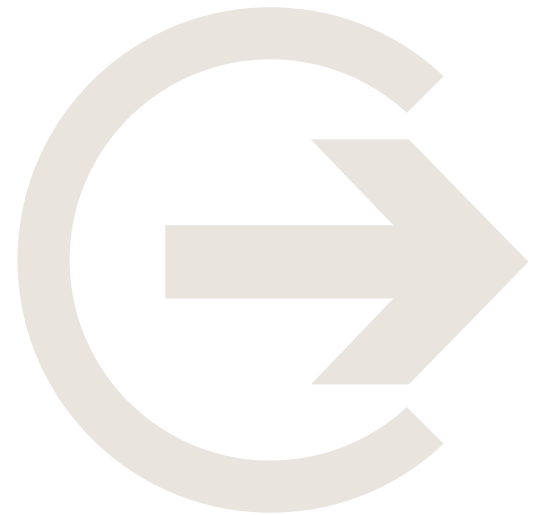
Media Coverage

A key element in communicating the Authority's work has been the effort to inform the state's print and electronic media about the project. Nearly 300 print and electronic stories on the Authority and the high-speed train project have appeared since January 1998.

Major daily papers reporting on the project include: *Los Angeles Times*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *The*

Sacramento Bee, *The Oakland Tribune*, *Daily News* (Los Angeles), *The Orange County Register*, *The Press-Enterprise* (Riverside), *San Bernardino County Sun*, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, *The Fresno Bee*, *The Record* (Stockton), and *The Bakersfield Californian*. In addition, print media serving Latino, African-American, and various Asian-Pacific Islander communities have also reported on the Authority's efforts.

Electronic media coverage has been solid given that the project is still in the conceptual stage of development. Interview highlights with Authority members have appeared on KCET's *Life and Times*, Century Cable, Univision, and in coverage on network affiliates, as well as radio stations, in nearly all of California's major media markets.



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7.2 Asking Californians What They Want in High-Speed Trains

Three ways of asking Californians how they view high-speed trains and what they would like to see in a high-speed train network were developed. The first way was two public opinion surveys, conducted in July-August 1998 and February-March 1999. The second was a series of focus groups held throughout the state in September-October 1998. The third is through an online questionnaire as part of the Authority's Web site. Following is a summary of what Californians have shared with the Authority.

Public Opinion Surveys

The two surveys the Authority conducted reached 3,000 Californians. These surveys found:

- Awareness of the high-speed train project increased from 38 percent in July 1998 to 47 percent in March 1999.
- Californians like the concept of a high-speed train system and are willing to support it — even with the prospect of a tax increase. Sixty-four percent supported the system with a 1/4-cent sales tax increase, while 62 percent supported the system with a 1/2-cent sales tax increase.
- Californians view high-speed trains as most beneficial when the system connects large urban areas and is intermodal — connecting easily with other forms of transportation. The most popular route was Los Angeles to San Francisco, with 69 percent of respondents suggesting it would be very valuable.
- Californians see high-speed trains as a way to protect their quality of life.
- Californians are willing to pay for the construction, but prefer to have the private sector share in the construction costs by a 71 percent to 20 percent margin. Both surveys identified the most persuasive arguments for high-speed trains to include:
 - 84%** Reducing air pollution
 - 82%** California needs to plan new forms of transportation because existing highways, freeways and roads are at or near capacity
 - 78%** Californians need to look 20 years ahead and plan for our children
 - 74%** It will be too expensive to continue to widen roadways in the future

Focus Groups

The Authority conducted eight discussion groups that included 100 respondents, selected randomly through telephone surveys. The discussion groups occurred in Sacramento, Concord, Fresno, Burbank, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Irvine, and San Diego. These sessions took a minimum of two hours and covered a range of issues pertinent to the Authority's work.

The focus group respondents:

- Were very supportive of the idea of building a high-speed train system because it is viewed as a transportation solution in California.
- Were supportive of funding alternatives that include a combination of public and private financing to build the network.
- Felt that High-speed trains are a transportation option to air and auto travel because they are faster, economical, safe, more convenient and more relaxing.

Web Site Questionnaire

The Web site contains a page with two basic questions to Californians: "What do you like about high-speed rail?" and "How would you use high-speed rail?" Following are results from the questionnaire:

What do you like about high-speed rail?

- 78%** Provides a cost-effective alternative to air travel
- 63%** Provides a transportation alternative for commuters
- 73%** Provides an environmentally sound alternative to car and air travel
- 75%** Meets transportation needs of state's growing population

How would you use high-speed rail?

- 90%** Vacation travel
- 58%** Business travel
- 26%** Commuting to work

These Web site results are not designed to be rigorous public opinion surveys. However, they do provide a useful tool for gauging what Californians think, and they reflect the views of those who are interested in learning more about the project.

7.3 Board of Advisors

Another outreach activity was the creation of an external board of advisors comprised of a cross-section of interested Californians. Nominated by individual members of the Authority and approved by the entire Authority, these individuals serve as a further stakeholder feedback vehicle. Membership is open and does not either require or imply support of the project.

Much like the public meetings, forums, and workshops, the meetings of the Board of Advisors are designed to combine an exchange of information about the status of the project with comments, concerns and questions from the board.

